

## Dear Friends of the Foundation:

Augustine tells in his *Confessions* that as an adult he was in a garden weeping when he heard a voice say, "Pick up and read, pick up and read." He picked up a Bible, opened it, and his eyes fell upon Romans 13:14, "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh." In that moment, he was converted to the Christian faith.

I neither wished nor needed to read further. At once, with the last words of this sentence, it was as if a light of relief from all anxiety flooded into my heart. All the shadows of doubt were dispelled.

Augustine, *Confessions*, translated with an Introduction and Notes by Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 152-153.

When I was fifteen years old, I read through the New Testament, beginning to end, two or three chapters a night. When I finished, I arrived at two conclusions. One is "To Christ belongs the victory! All else is secondary." That one has certainly carried me through some difficult times. The other was that I was being called into the ministry. Of course, I realized even then that I was not reading the Bible in a vacuum, as it were; I was reading it within the context of weekly worship, Sunday school, and so forth. But I also realized how powerful the Word is and can be.

In college, as a candidate for the ministry and in anticipation of going to seminary, I read through the Old Testament. It had occurred to me that I did not want to be in the position of preparing to be a minister of the Word if I had not opened myself to the Word and did not know what it said. I found nothing that dissuaded me from pursuing my call.

Some years later, I purchased from the Presbyterian bookstore a bookmark with five different colored ribbons. I put one in Genesis, one in the Psalms, one in Isaiah, one in Matthew, and the last one in Romans. Starting at each of those five points and reading a couple of pages at a time provided an alternative to simply starting at the beginning and going all the way through, and it generated an awareness of connections among the texts which I had not previously perceived.

**All of this is a long way around to say that I am writing today to ask whether you might have plans for reading through the Bible which we could share with each other.**

**The Reverend Ray D. E. McCalla**, pastor of First Presbyterian Church of Wayne, Nebraska, sent me his plan for reading through the Bible and a link to a page with seven other plans:

I have a personal Bible reading plan that loosely follows this pattern and suits my style: I begin reading the Bible in three places, Genesis, Ezra, and Matthew. Each day I read 1-2 chapters in each place, which exposes me to different places in the Bible and makes it easier to read it through cover-to-cover.

I also appreciate what Good News Publishers has done by offering the ESV Bible in [daily](#)

[devotional style](#). I recommend the BOCP plan from their Web site for our church members; I even made it a link from our church's Web site for easy access.

As I began with Augustine, let me end with him. Here is what he wrote about how diligently we are to read the Scriptures before we presume to interpret, preach, or teach from them:

“The first rule in this laborious task is, as I have said, to **know** these books; not necessarily to understand them but to read them so as to commit them to **memory**.”  
Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, translated with an Introduction and Notes by R. P. H. Green (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), Book 2, section 30, p. 37, emphasis added.]

**What plan of reading would you recommend to learn the Scriptures?**

Grace and Peace,

Jim

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